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CEP815

Final Project – Spring 2012

Sustainable Technology Initiative (STI)

My sustainable technology project has a ways to go yet.   All of us on the District Technology Committee feel the same way about the future: We have a ways to go yet. Let me paint you the picture and then I can explain my idea for a self-sustaining technology addition. Over the past 6 months, Elk Rapids Public Schools has implemented a faculty staffed District Technology Committee to help assure that our students, and our schools, will be prepared to compete in today's technology driven society. The twenty or so members of the DTC consist of administrators, teachers and support staff from the two grade schools, the middle school, the alternative academy and the high school. We have spent the last 4 months preparing a presentation for the board of education. This presentation illustrated many of the possibilities that technology can, and will do, for our district student population of approximately 1500. The situation for our district is that our millage is ending this year and we are proposing to keep the millage values at their current levels for an additional 3 years, so as to fund a technology initiative for the district. The board graciously agreed to put the item on the ballot for the May 7th public vote. If the bond proposal succeeds, the funds will be used for various technology upgrades around the district. There will be many building and network upgrades. There will be equipment repairs, upgrades and purchases. Perhaps the most exciting will be the 1:1 computing initiative where every student in the district will receive some type of mobile computing device. We have not decided on the type of mobile computing, but the vote is only a few weeks away. Now that I have that situation explained adequately, I can get to the sustainable plan I would like to try to implement. I propose that if the bond proposal does go through we set up a DTC governed, student led, student staffed support division that will assist the students, the staff and the community in all of their technology needs.

 I do realize that part of the requirement for this assignment is that no district resources should be used to fund my technology sustainability project. As I explain my sustainable technology initiative, or STI, you will realize that the STI will form, function, and grow because of the bond itself. With 1500 student using new technology, our 2 man IT department will need to have assistance if they are going to be able to address all the problems in each building. The student members of the STI will assist our IT department in setup, repairs, troubleshooting etc. When students have problems with their machines, they can go to the STI for support and assistance. If some of the less tech savvy educators need help with applications and implementation, they can go to the STI for help. When community members need services for their own machines, they can come and see STI. IF anyone needs phone support, our STI staff will be available to assist in any way they can, no matter who is calling. If you need tech support via the internet, STI will be manning the keyboards to try and lend a hand as well. This is just a rough plan so far, and I will endeavor to clarify the roles, requirements and procedures as this paper continues.

Even though the STI is initially formed in response to the passing of the technology bond, they will receive nothing directly from those funds. What I plan to set up is a district wide computer recovery effort for the initial push. The computers that are currently in the district maybe a little older, but most of them are still functioning and are still acceptable for use, especially if they were donated to STI free of charge by the district. When a new machine is purchased to replace an aging unit, STI would receive the older machine to do with it as it pleases. The STI team

could then refurbish or repair the machines to assist in their efforts. The machines that STI decided not to use could be taken apart, salvaged and the parts/electronics could be sold to help fund the STI budget. The STI team could utilize one of the computer labs, since all of the students will have their own machine of some type and the labs would no longer be needed. STI could set up a Support Center where students and staff could go to for assistance with individual programs or they could run training sessions to assist with the technology initiative. STI could also offer additional training sessions that would cost users a nominal amount for the training they would receive. We could open this service to the public as a more affordable alternative to other training services or companies. If STI was members were capable enough, they could offer other services as well, at a nominal cost, of course. Such things as virus sweeping, upgrade assistance, and other basic repairs could be offered to the public for a much lower price than larger stores would charge.

Since Elk Rapids is a small community with a general sense of unity and goodwill toward their fellow community members, we could offer a mobile support service for those people who could not bring their machines in the STI lair. The community would welcome one of their own making house calls. I believe that this service would be very popular for those community members who could offer the very affordable service charge to receive computer support in their own homes.

The key to any organization is its staff members. With the staff to provide leadership and guidance, STI members would be chosen based on personalities and capabilities. The important aspect would personality. Members need to be outgoing, sociable, and must possess a greater sense of community and collaboration than a sense of self. The success of this program is dependent on its student leaders. We would need to find responsible, intelligent, hard working, likable students that could not only solve problems, but be able to sell the product. These students must also genuinely care about the product they deliver and the people they serve. Students who know the most about the public they are serving will generally be more successful at fostering a trusting and welcoming relationship. If the STI care about the people we work with, and for, that attitude will most likely be reciprocated.

We would need to find students that would be able to free up certain hours of the day so as to have a STI member in the support lab when we needed it. I don't think we would be able to find 2 student leaders each hour with the desire and the ability to make all these things happen. We would have to make sure that we were open at certain times for the public. We would also have to let the staff know when the best time to come by to talk to a teacher or a STI member as well. I think that if students were aware of the potential benefits of being on the STI staff, they would be properly motivated. I think that there are many students who would love to be able the chance to work on computers in the manner we are trying to set up. Those students could be motivated by earning credits and also by the allure of gaining some possible trade experience.

Proper fit of the STI team is vital for success of this program. One way to assure that we have the proper team members in the correct positions is to offer STI jobs with a limited service time. The staff and faculty could then decide as a group if the individual STI members should be offered a renewal of their limited service agreement.

The staff of Elk Rapids High School would work tirelessly to make this program work. That is their nature, and that is why I love to teach there. We all care about the quality of education we deliver, the wellbeing of our student population, and the state of mind of our peers. Once those teachers who have successfully integrated technology into their classrooms were to show how effective and powerful these tools can be, I know that almost all of them would strive to emulate the same learning environment in their own classrooms. There would also be very few teachers that would not step up to help train the STI staff, assist them in their adventures and be a part of the successful system.

As with any program such as this, feedback is a vital part of growth and success. Surveys and questionnaires would be needed to give to those people who use the STI services. Problems and solutions could then be addressed at the appropriate times.

I would like to think that a program like this would be able to be put into rotation without too much difficulty at Elk Rapids. Maybe I have an elevated sense of worth of the students and staff. Who knows, maybe in another 10 days, I'll be able to see if my vision is going to become a reality. One can only hope………